

2647 ~~4474 d~~
TEMPERATE COMMENTS

UPON

7.

INTEMPERATE REFLECTIONS:

OR,

A REVIEW

K
MR. BURKE'S LETTER.

THE SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED AT THE Logographic Press;

AND SOLD BY

J. WALTER, No. 169, PICCADILLY, OPPOSITE OLD BOND STREET.

M,DCC.XCI.

TEMPERATURE COMMENTS

1867

INTERPRETATION REFLECTIONS

1867

A REVIEW



MR. BURR

THE SECOND EDITION

LONDON

Printed at the University Press

and sold by

J. WENTWORTH, 10, Abchurch Lane, London, E.C. 4.

1867

(2)

TEMPERATE COMMENTS, &c.

WHEN a man distinguished beyond most others by talents brilliant and universal, commits to the world his sentiments upon a subject so interesting as a Revolution in the government of a mighty Empire, his production is sought after with unusual avidity,—his opinions are regarded with a particular degree of respect. The multitude, looking with reverence towards shining ability and pre-eminent wisdom, is inclined to be guided in its judgment by the authority of such a man;—the mind is willing to place dependence upon the fame of genius and wonderful penetration;—prejudices even are relinquished, and favourite systems abandoned, by yielding diffidence, to the high reputation of sagacity, learning, and experience.

With advantages like these, Mr. Burke steps forward as an author:—In him the most choice

A

acquire-

acquirements of art are happily blended with the noblest gifts of nature. To ability of the rarest kind, and uncommon vigour of understanding, are superadded the most elegant endowments of literature, philosophy, and science:—A man of knowledge more various, and acquaintance more extensive with things past and present, does not perhaps exist. Genius and industry have united their utmost efforts in the adorning an accomplished mind.

The subject upon which he has chosen to bring his opinions before the Public, is one of the most important that ever occurred: The records of antient and modern times furnish not an instance of any other Revolution so peculiar in its circumstances,—of so much moment in its consequences. One of the most powerful and populous nations upon the face of the globe has effected, not a partial reform,—not the correction of a system,—but a complete and perfect change, by which a subsisting government is demolished, and a new form, differing in every principle, established. France alone is not interested in this extraordinary event, as every nation in the world must be affected by the influence of an example so illustrious. It is an enquiry, therefore, well worth the attention of every friend to the human race, whether this Revolution was warranted

ranted by circumstances, and justifiable in conduct, or the offspring of licentiousness,—the infamous measure of friends to faction, and enemies to good order in society :—Whether the happiness of mankind in general is likely to be promoted by it, or distraction and disorder to be diffused over the earth by the vile contagion.

For the investigation of an object of such magnitude as the FRENCH REVOLUTION, Mr. Burke appears eminently qualified :—With industry to enquire, discernment to distinguish, and ability to judge, he enjoys that celebrity of moral character, which places him above the suspicion of wilful misrepresentation, or intentional delusion. His powers of mind are not more transcendent than his integrity inflexible. In the course of a life, every hour of which has been marked by endeavours to render advantage to mankind, and contribute to the improvement of society, his purity of motive, and patriotism of design, have seldom been called into question : Soaring above disguise, and proof against temptation to mislead, he is actuated in every research by the desire of truth. The sentiments he avows are not fashioned to the humour of the times, or the purpose of a moment. When he speaks, or when he writes, the world gives him credit for sincerity, and regards every declaration as proceeding from principle and reflection. In view-

ing an individual of this description, human nature has reason to be proud. The condition of man is seldom seen under circumstances more flattering to the vanity of his class. A person of moderate attainments contemplates with pleasure and amazement such admirable elevation of noble faculties.—But perfection is not within the reach of mortals:—The greatest and the best are often liable to impressions deceptive and violent, in proportion as their feelings are acute. Any circumstance giving an extreme degree of offence to a susceptible mind, not unfrequently produces such aversion to every proceeding with which it is connected, as to turn aside even the best intentions to misapplication of facts, and involuntary perversion of reason. In superior abilities, labouring under the misfortune of a misleading bias, from wounded delicacy of sentiment, the deviation becomes more considerable than in common men, as the combination of ideas is more rapid, and the imagination more fertile.

In the late production of Mr. Burke this fact becomes evident to every impartial reader. The whole carries testimony of admirable ability: but the splendour of genius, the dignity of learning, the radiance of philosophy, the ardour of patriotism, the enthusiasm of virtue, the zeal of religion,

gion, the force of eloquence, the charms of wit, the beauty of elegant composition,—these, and other most estimable qualities, are obscured by a predominating shade, the sources of which are easily traced.

In the progress of a great Revolution, by which emancipation from tyranny is effected, the people, intoxicated with the pleasure of new-born freedom, and stimulated by resentment against former oppressors, act under the impulse of licentious fury, by which they are hurried into irregularities disgusting to coolness and reflection. As the establishment of proper authority after the dissolution of power, is not the business of a day, it becomes impossible, during the convulsion, to keep within moderate bounds the ungoverned rage of a rabble, whose congratulation of liberty is manifested in severity and cruelty towards persons by whom the blessing had been so long withheld. This is an evil the concomitant of every radical change; and because it is inevitable, shall conditions of slavery the most abject be endured? Shall a state continue to groan under the deprivation of rights most sacred and valuable? Shall millions languish in misery, without aiming at the recovery of dearest privileges, which they behold the pride and glory of a neighbouring kingdom? Shall the ghastly

tower of despotism, standing between a whole country and every cheering sun-beam, be inviolate, because it carries the sanction of time, and cannot be undermined without some accidents in the fall? Mr. Burke will not maintain propositions so absurd. He is too much the friend of liberty, to deny the justice of resuming authority when abused. There is not in the world a more determined enemy to the immoderate exercise of power; nor a man who would stand more forward in patriotic resistance, if it were his misfortune to be the subject of a kingdom under the former condition of France. As an unconcerned spectator, however, Mr. Burke's extreme sensibility has drawn him into error. The calls of humanity have superseded even the duties of reason, and warped an understanding which sets at defiance every other endeavour to mislead. Forgetting the criminality by which distress has been incurred, as in the memorable case of Powell, where compassion threw a veil over his better judgment, and exposed him to the imputation of official delinquency, in directing the force of government towards the protection of public fraud, he cannot hear without emotion of suffering guilt. His attention has been turned with horror towards the sacrifices that have been made to popular resentment; when, as Mr. Fox with admirable discrimination observed, his reprobation ought to have

have been pointed against the vile oppression, by which the spirit of cruel licence and savage revenge was excited in a people, whose patient endurance had been unparalleled.

An excess of humanity has been a principal cause of Mr. Burke's extraordinary sentiments upon this subject. Another, however, of no inconsiderable weight, is assigned:—the education of this gentleman at St. Omer's, *and under the auspices of a Society more remarkable for its zeal in the cause of the Catholic Church than any other order of the priesthood*, could not fail to produce in the juvenile mind, a reverence for that amazing fabric, the destruction of which is threatened by the French Revolution. When he avows himself a Protestant, I cannot refuse him credit; but although something in the doctrines, as in the discipline of the reformed religion, may appear more engaging on account of simplicity, and more conducive to moral conduct,—the great end of religion,—than particular articles of the Roman establishment, he may yet retain a high respect for that immense institution, the dignity, the consequence, the grandeur of which are now shaken to the foundation.

To these unpropitious springs we must attribute an inveterate prejudice to measures, of which

he general tenor would otherwise have received his highest approbation.—It must have met the applause of the assertor of liberty—the friend of mankind. It is a melancholy reflection, that a person eminent for excellence and wisdom, should, under any circumstances, be deluded by feelings too exquisite—that philosophy most enviable, should ever be extinguished in an enlightened breast by the malignant gloom of bigotry.

We are informed by the Preface, that the substance of Mr Burke's Publication had its origin in a correspondence with a gentleman at Paris, who had strongly solicited his opinion upon the proceedings in that capital. This gentleman supposed his friend might be favourable to those transactions, as they had obtained the seal of sanction from two Clubs in London. Mr. Burke disavows every connection with these Societies, and comments with severity upon their conduct. We are happy in being able to express our hearty approbation of this commencement of his Letter. The assumed importance of two obscure associations endeavouring to engage the notice of a people's representatives in a foreign country, is treated with just asperity, and admirable ridicule. To enter into a correspondence with the great government of another kingdom, was an arrogance

rogance unequalled in such meetings. We are of opinion with Mr. Burke, that the attention paid to the address of one, must have proceeded from the equivocal form under which it appeared. From the high-sounding description of this association, the French might conclude that they were a body by which the sentiments of Britain were expressed. It could scarcely be conceived, that a set of unimportant individuals, who meet yearly at a tavern for a purpose sufficiently laudable, if its limits were not exceeded, should be puffed up with such exalted ideas of their own consequence, as to suppose that a congratulation from them could merit the regard of the National Assembly:—A congratulation from persons empowered to declare—not the disposition of Government,—not the sense of the Public from authority,—but the sentiments of a Club, of which the members are dissenters from the established form of religion,—a kind of aliens, who subscribe not entirely to the principles of their own government, but in matters of theology withdraw themselves from the great body of the people. Whatever the purport of their communication may have been, there was something extremely reprehensible in the ostentation of sending it under circumstances that might give the idea of its being a public testimony.

We

We wish we could join as cordially in sentiment with Mr. Burke throughout the whole of his production; but the fatal impression under which he wrote becomes speedily apparent. After maintaining that there are circumstances in which freedom may be an evil, he illustrates his position by enquiring—"If he should felicitate a madman, who has escaped from the protecting restraint and wholesome darkness of his cell, on his restoration to the enjoyment of light and liberty? Am I to congratulate an highwayman and murderer, who has broken prison, upon the recovery of his natural rights?"

Where is the analogy between a dissolution of the late government in France, and the escape of a lunatic, or of a most atrocious criminal, from situations the most proper under their circumstances,—from restraints which reason, law and justice have imposed? In what can the comparison consist, unless its author would contend that this *lamented Government* was not simply a good system, but the very best and most proper that could have been invented for that district of the earth over which it prevailed?

What was that Government? A state of despotism, where the lives and fortunes of millions were liable to be sacrificed to the resentment of
a favour-

a favourite, the caprice of a mistress, or the interest of a despicable minion. Where a Nobility and Clergy, forward in supporting the most arbitrary measures of the Crown, were, in recompense, maintained in exemption from public burdens, and many other privileges galling and oppressive to the people:—Where the inhabitants were drained to support the matchless extravagance of the voluptuous and dissipated adherents of a licentious court, money being taken without consent, and squandered without account, in most scandalous profusion:—Where the execution of the laws was perverted to the purposes of the great, and the regular administration of justice withheld:—Where a quiet and harmless life, with industry and integrity, were not any security against the misery of chains and the horrors of a dungeon; as the least opposition to the unwarrantable will of a worthless woman, the intolerable pride of an imperious lord, or the grasping spirit of a rapacious priest, might draw down a *lettre de cachet*, by which the wretched object would be for ever secluded from the light and every comfort. These are not imaginary circumstances; yet Mr. Burke can find resemblance betwixt active resistance to such unlimited tyranny, and the flight of insanity from salutary restriction, or of blackest guilt from the just vengeance of the offended law!

Mr.

Mr. Burke contrasts the measures in France, where all has been torn up by the root, with the conduct of this country, which, without violating the original principles of an antient government, has from time to time been employed in correcting and repairing, till the British Constitution has arrived at its present state of noble perfection,—a Constitution that leaves not room for improvement. In his observations upon that period of our history which is termed the *Revolution*, the depth of his information, and the extent of his reasoning powers are eminently displayed. But while every person who has a just sense of the happiness we enjoy, and every friend to tranquillity must reprobate the Sermon of the Old Jewry, no man impressed with the spirit of the system under which we live, can go along with Mr. Burke to the extreme length of his arguments in controversion of the principles maintained by Dr. Price. That Government ought to proceed in the first instance from the people, for whose advantage it is intended, is a position to which few will refuse assent. The pretensions of monarchs whose first ancestors were usurpers, are not to be so much respected as the rights of a sovereign, who is indebted for his elevation and the hereditary privileges conferred upon his family, to the exalting choice of an approving people. If this principle be denied, shall possession, without

without regard to the manner in which it is acquired, constitute an immediate right? Or how many generations are necessary to give respect to usurpation, and establish a right to power illegally assumed? Is the tyrant Tippoo as yet the lawful sovereign of Mysore? Mr. Burke's principle leaves not a shadow of distinction betwixt possession and right. But while we profess a particular respect for the representatives of kings who were raised to the throne by the confirming voice of the multitude, we feel abhorrence at the tendency of Dr. Price's assertion, which would shake the seats of almost every potentate. Long possession constitutes pretensions which cannot be surmounted. If the descendants of Cromwell had at this day been governing in England according to the constitution, their right would not have been disputed.

Mr. Burke reasons with better justice upon Dr. Price's second principle of *cashiering Kings*. We are deficient in language for expressing our detestation of a Divine, who can prostitute the functions of his office, by expatiating, in the grossest terms, upon a subject of so much delicacy. That authority abused may be resumed, is a truth of which every mind feels conviction,—the doctrine is alive in every breast;—but every good man, satisfied with the secret concurrence of his
fellow-

fellow-subjects, in regard to the existence of the privilege, must protest against this indecent mode of inculcating it at a period of the most perfect happiness and content, when there is no subject of complaint,—no object of demand: the pulpit was never more scandalously *abused* than in the propagation of sentiments which nothing but deplorable necessity should embody; and we hope our constitution is not defective in laws for *cashiering* a *factious* priest.

Mr. Burke is at pains to set aside the opinion of England having exerted the privilege of forming a new government at the time of the Revolution; his ingenuity, however, cannot make out any feasible claim of hereditary right in the person of King William. The reason why some appearance of regard to rights of inheritance was made by fixing upon relatives of the old family, is obvious. Much disturbance would have taken place between the interests of contending candidates for the crown, and much inconvenience from placing an ordinary man in that high station,—a man whose connections would have enjoyed inordinate influence, and whom former equals must have beheld with envy. When the restoration of monarchy had been determined upon, it was wisely resolved to confer the dignity of King upon a man already in possession of superior

perior distinction, and to fix the succession upon persons born to ideas of royalty,—the descendants of Kings. Thus by a prudent *affectation* of tenderness for a principle which, nevertheless, was violated in an extreme degree, danger in the employment, from the novelty of power, was avoided,—trouble to the State, from envy and jealousy pursuing recent elevation, kept at a distance,—and unanimous submission to the supreme authority secured.

Mr. Burke, when he endeavours to set aside the pretensions that are grounded upon the popular basis of the *rights of men*, speaks of government as a thing settled by *convention*. Does not convention suppose public assent in the first instance? Does it not imply approbation expressed by the people? His observation, that abstract rights are surrendered by convention for the benefit of society at large, strikes almost as severely as the principles of PRICE, at governments where there has been no convention,—where native privileges have not been relinquished by consent,—where power, in the first instance, has been usurped,—where its security in injustice has depended upon the subjection of the mind, and the arbitrary employment of force accidentally acquired, to the destruction of rights not incompatible with good government. Such a right is the right of unoffend-

unoffending innocence to liberty of person, or of suspected guilt to an open and fair investigation of the imputed crime: rights like these lend dignity to human nature, and are not inconsistent with the best of governments. No prescription of time,—no apprehension of confusion in the downfall, should give security to any system under which such rights are unsecured.—By the rights of men, sober reason has never intended to describe other rights than such as cannot be kept back with advantage in any rational establishment: but rights of that kind, without the enjoyment of which there can be no ability of guarding against wrongs, are claimed by every principle of original justice. Convention, applied to government, must signify an agreement by which power is committed in trust, and abstract rights surrendered by consent, for the advantage of the community. It admits, in the fullest sense, that constitutional doctrine of legal authority being in the first instance derived from the people. What then becomes of these governments where there has been no convention,—no stipulations between sovereign and subject,—and where any blessings that are enjoyed, must be regarded as the favours of the Ruler towards *his property*?

The delusive prejudice, under the veil of which Mr. Burke has viewed every incident of this Re-

volution, is peculiarly manifest in his comments upon the composition of the National Assembly. Greatly as we respect his knowledge and discernment, we cannot give him credit for the wonderful penetration and admirable foresight to which he lays claim, when he asserts, that as soon as he had examined the list of the elected, he was able to foretel all that has come to pass. By what train of study, or by what power of divination, did he become acquainted with the abilities, the circumstances, the characters of twelve hundred persons, collected from every district of an extensive empire? If Assemblies had been used to meet annually in Paris, as Parliaments in London, even distant observers of their proceedings might have formed opinions in regard to the general description of constituent members; and a reference to some such volume as a *red book*, after a new election, might have conveyed an imperfect idea of a new assembly; but at a meeting of *the States*, after an intermission of ages, when a large proportion of the delegates is summoned from the remotest provinces,—delegates whose greatest credit must consist in having been residents among those by whom they are deputed,—it is monstrous for a man to affect to dive into their conditions, from the glance of an eye over a catalogue of their names. In this country, where the commerce of London would alone be sufficient for

keeping up a greater intercourse between the capital and the provinces, than can subsist in any other kingdom of equal extent,—if, after the expiration of one Parliament, the short period of a Parliament's duration were to elapse before another was summoned, Mr. Burke would have difficulty in pronouncing at once upon the complexion of the new House of Commons. There would be many of whose names he never could have heard but for the fortune of their election; and an absence of seven years would have made strange the faces of others, who had been accustomed to make annual visits to the metropolis:—yet, with magic intuition, he ventures to decide upon the qualities and views of the French delegates;—he prognosticates upon the principles and conduct of twelve hundred men, drawn from all quarters of a country, where, from the confinement of commerce, and former restrictions upon the press, the circulation of character has been much more limited than in Britain!!!

Mr. Burke having given an opinion at large upon the materials of the National Assembly, proceeds to investigate the separate parts; and, in the first place, he expresses dissatisfaction with the proportions they bear to each other, and contends that an equality to the number of the *Tiers-Etat*, in the Nobility and Clergy taken together, was insufficient,

cient, because the least secession from their conjoined forces gave prevalence to the other interest. Was a secession from them more likely to take place than from the *Tiers-Etat*? Was it not, on the contrary, to be apprehended, the influence which the Peerage and Church must inevitably possess in France, as in this country, in the election of the people's delegates, would have given a preponderating weight in the National Assembly? This must have been the case, if the measures of that body had been liable to the charges Mr. Burke brings against them; but a spirit of patriotism pervading many of even the higher orders, has united them with the Third Estate in the glorious purpose of breaking the chains of despotism. Never did they give such testimony of true nobility, and pious benevolence, as in the liberal sacrifice of selfish views to the exalted shrine of public benefit. Yet Mr. Burke reprobates, as treachery of the most shameful kind, this secession, inspired by genuine zeal for a country's good!

If our author's statement might be credited, the bulk of the Assembly, after the Nobility have been reckoned, consists of pettifogging attorneys,—the most despicable of the medical profession,—monied men, whose conduct is directed entirely to the security and advancement of their

own property,—curates of the lowest description,—and country gentlemen of the most illiterate class. *He believes that there are, in that Assembly, numbers who can neither read nor write.* Mr. Burke has the talent of rendering absurdity plausible, and of communicating to fiction the lustre of truth. In all his relations there is such appearance of accuracy, and so much attraction of manner, that he gains by seduction the immediate approbation of his readers, and extracts from incredulity a temporary assent. But the charm is soon dissipated by reflection. Reason cannot easily be persuaded that in the election of representatives, upon an occasion of the highest solemnity, success should have attended the most contemptible of every condition; and, least of all, that the clergy should be so blind to their own interest, as to fix upon the meanest, the poorest, the most worthless members of the church to be the representatives of that ever jealous order, in the grand council of the nation;—a council summoned on account of exigencies the most urgent, and to the forming of which all Europe had an eye.

Mr. Burke, like a theorist, devoting himself entirely to a favourite hypothesis, has employed, in support of the principles which have gained ascendancy in his own breast, all the *juvantia* and
ledentia

sedentia of argument.—Having surrendered his own judgment to deception, he contrives to turn to his aid the most opposing circumstances, and is indefatigable in propagating the infection of deceit, by the most ingenious, yet unintended sophistry. The representation in France appears to have been conducted upon terms of as much fairness and justice as can be obtained in a matter of such difficulty; but the opponent of parliamentary reform in England, where, if there be a defect, it is in the mode of choosing representatives, takes to pieces the original constitution of the Assembly, that he might give force to his strictures upon the whole of its decrees.

With equal injustice he endeavours to cast reproach upon the manner of their proceedings, and labours to ridicule the serious attention which considerations of little importance appear sometimes to obtain. If Mr. Burke's usual candour had not deserted him throughout the whole of this investigation, he would not have expected, in the first meeting of so numerous an assembly, the same regularity, and rigid adherence to order, by which a British Parliament is distinguished. They have not yet had time to make out a system of forms;—they have not yet been able to digest a code of parliamentary law;—they have not the guide of experience, and the assistance of well-

tried regulations, which give security against turbulence, and dispatch to deliberation. Can it then be thought matter of surprize that there are occasional tumults? It ought likewise to be remembered, that in the grand task of new modelling a government, where much is to be dreaded from the spirit of anarchy that must prevail, a desire to produce harmony between contending interests, and conciliate the public mind, may gain respect to proposals and complaints, which, under other circumstances, would be unworthy the attention of a senate.

The leading measures which Mr. Burke, in his Review of this Revolution, regards with so much horror, and represents with so much distortion, were not to be avoided in a struggle for freedom. Small is the number of unprejudiced observers, who can accord with him in thinking, that because there was, in remote ages, something like a shadow of freedom in France, a free government might have been re-established, by pursuing the steps which led to the perfection of liberty in England. Every feature of freedom had long since been obliterated.—Every attempt to regain it would have been opposed with as much violence as an entire change. By following the line of this country a new spirit might, perhaps, have been infused by drops into the old system, and,

and, after the accumulation of an hundred years, when the grand-children of the present race were sinking into their graves, a constitution less liable to exception might have appeared.

Does Mr. Burke seriously imagine, that the Crown, the Nobility, or the Clergy, would have acceded to any fundamental alteration of the old Government?—Does he not recollect a late dismissal of the Parliament of Paris?—The banishment of one individual, illustrious by birth, but more distinguished by his efforts in the cause of freedom, and the imprisonment of another, the President of that Parliament?—Has he forgot, that after the convocation of *the States*, when with a true spirit of patriotism, of which England has, in a thousand instances, set an example, the Assembly was proceeding to a redress of grievances, before it would grant the supplies that were required,—when they had not yet deviated from the most profound respect for the Crown, and the strictest bounds of moderation;—does he forget that they were *commanded* to confine themselves to the simple object on account of which they had been convened, viz. a consideration of means for relieving the embarrassments of the kingdom?—That they were prohibited from interfering, in the smallest degree, with the established prerogatives of the Crown; and that the abolition of *lettres de cachet*,
B 4
these

these most formidable engines of oppression, was positively denied?—And has it escaped the memory of Mr. Burke, that, when these stubborn patriots, in defiance of the threats held over them, were pursuing, with temperate firmness, the correction of abuse, as a constitutional prelude to public contribution, a proclamation was issued for their dissolution;—a military force was employed to drive them from their house,—the existing Ministry, which possessed a considerable portion of popular confidence, were compelled to resign their places to successors odious on account of arbitrary principles, and well known enmity to *the States*,—an army was collecting, under the command of the sanguinary *Broglie*—the most diabolical measures were adopted for causing an artificial scarcity of provisions,—and every thing gave testimony of a horrid determination to subdue the spirit of reform by famine and sword?—All this happened before there was any tendency to tumult,—before the privileges of the Nobility had been infringed,—before the property of the Church had been confiscated. It is probable that till then, the most innovating leaders of the popular party did not dream of the extremities which were from that moment rendered necessary by the unambiguous display of the infernal intentions of the Court. Every person who will carry back his remembrance

brance to that period, must bring to mind his approbation of the Assembly,—his apprehensions for its safety,—and the conviction he felt of the design of Government to resist the most minute concession, by the same tyrannous severity, and bloody system of intimidation, which, within a period of recent date, had disgraced the Court of France in the affair of Corsica.

Mr. Burke contents himself with laughing at the idea of a general massacre, without bringing evidence or arguments to refute the suspicion.—He withdraws his regard from all the circumstances that preceded the attempted dissolution of the Assembly, and leave it not a matter of suspicion;—he rivets his attention to the measures that ensued, when the friends to prudent and moderate reform were compelled to shelter themselves from the impending rod of despotic cruelty, by means most repugnant to their wishes and opposite to their original intentions;—when those who had contended against imprisonment, without the imputation of crime,—the infliction of tortures, without evidence of guilt,—and the terrors of death, by private execution, without trial, in a dungeon,—were obliged to save themselves, and tens of thousands interested in their fate, by taking at once from the enemy the sinews of power, and destroying the energy of a government,

ment, the force of which was about to be employed for a purpose as malignant as the dæmon of hell could have suggested.

From this time we must date the commencement of tumult; and when we reflect upon the just resentment excited by fear of bloody persecution, the indignant vexation inspired by the threatened disappointment of those flattering expectations of redress which the meeting of *the States* had encouraged, and the exaggeration of misery endured from preconcerted famine, we cannot be surprised that many enormities were committed, and that a few sacrifices were made to popular frenzy. It ought rather to be matter of amazement, that the mischief has been so inconsiderable, and that so little blood has been shed. There never was a Revolution so much marked by forbearance towards unwarrantable opposition:—there never was any considerable change of Government effected with so few concomitant circumstances of horror and disgust. The unequalled mildness with which the whole has been conducted, must be a source of particular satisfaction to the friends of humanity.—It would have received the warmest commendation of Mr. Burke, if his abhorrence of one or two principal incidents, had not raised up a prejudice, through

through the magnifying medium of which every thing has appeared monstrous and deformed.

If a tolerable modification of Government could have been obtained without the entire demolition of the old system, the nation, rather than encounter the calamities of a great convulsion, would have been inclined to rest satisfied with something short of excellence. If the Crown would have relinquished a portion of its most obnoxious privileges,—the Nobility submitted to moderate restitution,—the Church to salutary regulation,—and every distinction in society to equality of burthens, so that the grinding exactions from poverty might have been diminished,—the improvements would have been gratifying to many. If, at the same time, some kind of public and *unconstrained* assent had been rendered necessary for giving force to pecuniary edicts,—some manner of accounting to the people for the application of the revenue established,—and responsibility attached to Ministers for public expenditure,—the multitude would have been contented with a constitution considerably amended. By yielding to such concessions, the present sovereign, without suffering much reduction of regal authority, would have gained, from gratitude and affection, a degree of influence beyond what was ever possessed by any monarch

narch of France. If the general ideas of his character be just, he is a man who in private life would have been respected for moderation and benevolence,—for honourable intention,—openness of manner, and unaffected integrity.—Had he, as a King, been left to the unbiaſſed guidance of his will, he would have embraced with eagerness and joy, the glorious opportunity of giving happiness to his people, by listening to their complaints, and complying with their reasonable requests; but it was the misfortune of his easy nature to have been long the dupe of vicious artifice, and interested wickedness,—of unprincipled and insatiable ambition,—of matchless extravagance,—ungoverned dissipation, and abandoned profligacy.—Qualities like these, dreaded in every departure from absolute power, limitation of expence, inspection of conduct, detection of crimes, exposure of fraud, and the disgrace of favourites, whose administering and pliant profusion had brought reproach upon the King, and spread extensive ruin over his dominions. Under the shelter of despotism only, could such atrocity of misconduct find protection; and therefore the semblance of acceding to reform, was a disguise assumed until the measures of resistance were ripe for execution.

It soon became obvious, that if the National Assembly had circumscribed itself within the
mandate

mandate of the sovereign, and confined its discussion to the disordered state of the finances, there was not in the court any design of profiting by their labours. A more expeditious method of being relieved from every demand, and of supplying every exigency, had been determined upon; while the grand council of the kingdom was amused with permission to deliberate upon ways and means, the interior cabinet was preparing a more effectual remedy; it was almost in the last act of absolving Government from the claim of every creditor:—A general bankruptcy was the solemn resolution of the secret rulers.—Mr. Burke may, perhaps, affect incredulity in regard to this circumstance.—The evidence, however, is as complete as any combination of concurring circumstances could make it. From the premeditated insult at Nootka, by Spain, and the infraction of treaties by our rooted enemy in Asia, it is now evident that France, in conjunction with her allies, had resolved to be at war with England before this time. The plan must have been formed about the very time when *the States* were first assembled. It were therefore insulting to reason to assert, that the Court could be serious in seeking the assistance of the Assembly towards relieving the condition of the finances, when already weighed down by an enormous load of debt, to the support of which
the

the resources were altogether inadequate, it was on the point of plunging wantonly, and without provocation, into a contest with England.—War was to have been a pretext for a bankruptcy ; and the military condition of the kingdom, during war, afforded ready means of subduing the prevailing spirit of discontent. Where then would have been the Assembly ? Instead of a solitary *lantern*,—upon which, notwithstanding the noise it has made, there have not been, since the commencement, more than five or six summary executions in all,—every lamp-iron in Paris would have appeared a gibbet : instead of the innocent being released from melancholy endurance of cold and hunger amidst the filth of gloomy cells, every dungeon would have been crammed almost to bursting with the opposers of *lettres de cachet*, and the earth excavated to form new Bastilles for all who should dare to murmur against the *equity of Government*, in equalizing the revenue to the expenditure,—not by the meanness of œconomy and retrenchment,—not by limiting the pension list and restraining the unbounded profusion of a licentious junto,—not by the injustice of saddling with a share of public burthens the higher orders, in violation of sacred privileges ;—but by a measure more becoming the dignity and honour of a great nation,—the entire abolition of pecuniary engagements, too trivial to be binding upon

upon a high-minded court. This was an unparalleled expedient of policy and wisdom, the failure of which cannot be too much lamented by those who are averse to that indolent condition of peace into which the world is in danger of sinking. Had not this admirable project been frustrated, the population of kingdoms would not have been liable to multiply into rank luxury, nor industry to be discouraged by wealth and plenty. The renovated power and encreased importance of France, conjoined with the most exquisite spirit of intrigue, would have dispersed to every state upon the globe, some portion of the *advantages* of war; and Britain in particular would have been furnished with glorious opportunities of adding to her fame for bravery and conduct, by the magnitude of her exertions, and the splendour of her victories; while the subjects of the French monarchy would have arrived, under the fostering guides of rack and execution, at an improved happiness of restraint from the emission of every obnoxious word—at the philosophic comfort of combating internal resentment against oppression,—at exclusion almost from the liberty of indulging the most secret thoughts upon matters of state, lest the features of the countenance should give testimony of the treason in the mind, or utterance in

in dreams make known the nature of the prevailing sentiment.

If a middle condition between the despotism of monarchy, and what Mr. Burke has termed the despotism of the multitude, could have been established, it was a consummation devoutly to be wished; but when the duplicity of the court became apparent, and the most savage ingenuity of inhuman tyranny was about to be exerted for the purpose of smothering every latent spark of liberty, it behoved the Assembly, in justice to their country and themselves, to tear from the uplifted hand of oppression the hideous scourge which was raised in terrors to smite an empire. Their subsequent measures were dictated by prudence and necessity.

The incidents at Versailles on the day when the King was carried to Paris, have called forth the most severe execration of Mr. Burke. He has endeavoured to excite disgust, by the deepest colouring of an unbounded imagination. He labours to convey an insinuation of a resolution having been formed for assassinating the Royal Family. But this carries absurdity on the face of it. If there had been any such intention in persons of authority, there could have been little difficulty in having it completed. On the contrary,

trary, the weight of the National Assembly, and the force of the military, acting under the influence of the Revolution party, was employed in restraining tumult, and protecting the King and his family. The indignation of Mr. Burke ought to rest upon those whose pernicious counsel had rendered necessary a proceeding which could not be carried into effect without circumstances at which the mind revolts. When a plot was discovered for conveying the Sovereign from the kingdom, there was wisdom and propriety in preventing the execution of it, by placing him in safety under the eye of the Assembly at Paris. If his Majesty, misguided by the same noxious advice which had filled the measure of public calamities almost to the brim, were to have been induced to erect the Royal standard in some distant province, the horrors of civil war, the greatest extreme of misery with which a state can be afflicted, must have raged with consuming violence. Hundreds of thousands of lives would have been snatched within its vortex, while poverty and wretchedness were extended to the nation's edge. To guard against this disaster was tenderness to the king, and mercy to his people. The business was conducted with as much temperance as the nature of it would admit; yet it was impossible to keep within bounds the blind fury of a frantic rabble, goaded by famine. That

any of the faithful adherents, whose loyalty and attachment as domestic servants were their best claims to respect, should have perished, cannot be too much lamented. But their blood be upon those whose fatal influence produced the necessity for securing the King!—Theirs be the guilt, whose damnable machinations left not to loyalty an option betwixt outrage to the Sovereign and desolation to the State!

Mr. Burke has been lavish in compliment to the prime source of every misfortune. Has then the universal opinion in regard to this personage been founded in error?—Has the general detestation of her conduct been notoriously unjust?—If this is the case, never was woman so scandalously defamed; as, till the Revolution, who of the Nobility, the Clergy, or the People, was used to profess respect for her character?—All ranks were united in condemnation. That vision which when just ascended above the horizon, had appeared delightful like the morning star, glittering in joy and splendour, assumed, in the zenith of its course, the malignant aspect of a blazing comet, sweeping the orb over which it moved with a destructive train, which carried devastation in its progress. Yet because ten thousand swords did not start from their scabbards to avenge every look which threatened her

her with insult, "The age of chivalry is gone; that of sophisters, œconomists and calculators has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprize is gone! It is gone,—that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness."

This sublime and beautiful exclamation would not have done discredit to the mirror of knight-hood, that valorous champion whose admirable gallantry and noble achievements are famed in history by Cervantes. Its effect was so powerful, that we almost expected to find our author avowing an intention of sallying forth in armour upon another Rosinante, to punish the corruption of manners, the degeneracy of virtue, the contempt of honour, the absence of humanity, the shameful inattention to beauty,—in a word, to correct

the enormous depravity of the times, by restoring to a grateful and admiring world, the blessings of chivalry.

Mr. Burke's dissatisfaction with every act of the Revolution is unqualified:—He cannot discover in the whole one feature of wisdom, policy, or justice; but his expression of resentment is peculiarly directed against the altered constitution of the Church. That it is which has rankled in his mind, and tainted by infection the general current of his thoughts. He is enraged with the Assembly for interfering in the appropriation of a kind of property, which he asserts to be, in law and justice, as fixed and as inviolable as any other order of possessions. The argument is a libel upon various periods of our Government, during which, the rights of the Church have been infringed. The satisfaction he expresses at the present condition of our ecclesiastical establishment cannot be sincere, as grievous curtailments have been endured, and Kings and Parliaments of England have been guilty of robbery and sacrilege, in assuming privileges which are now denied to the grand council of France.

The necessity of a Church establishment, maintained in dignity and independence, is admirably
set

set forth by Mr. Burke. Such an establishment is the pride of this country, where the clergy enjoy their just importance in the State, and are secured in a revenue which gives comfort and consequence to the order. The happy medium is hit betwixt penury of provision, reflecting contempt upon sacred institutions, and that excess of wealth, which, in Catholic countries, contributes to indolence of manners, laxity of morals, habits of luxury, and inattention to duty. The clergy are contented;—the people grudge them not their possessions. The great ends of a Church establishment are zealously promoted by the precept and example of those to whom the care of religion is assigned: but the case was different in France. The enormous bulk of property in the hands of the clergy, had long been regarded as a grievance by the people. These estates, of which possessors have but a life-rent, are in every country unfavourable to the advancement of cultivation and improvement. The holders for the time, regarding only the means of increasing the value to themselves, are ingenious in contriving to augment the present income, without respect to futurity. Extortion and rapacity are the characteristics of their management;—misery and poverty the condition of their tenantry.

Such an extent of wealth as was enjoyed by the clergy in France, was not only productive of corruption in themselves, of ruin to agriculture, and of oppression to the people, but incompatible with freedom, and adverse to the interest of trade: the distribution of an amazing revenue, cemented between the crown and the church a dangerous connection. Industry was checked, and the spirit of enterprize discouraged, while an affluent and easy provision, in sloth and luxury, was afforded by the clerical profession. Every consideration of religion, of liberty, and of policy, forbade the continuance of so large a proportion of the national wealth under the condition of Church property.

But in France there was another inducement: when from the matchless profusion of that Government with which the Church was so intimately united, every resource of the common kind had been exhausted, and every means of supply rendered unequal to the exigencies of the State, on whom could a part of the burthen be settled with so much propriety, as an order whose selfish endeavours, from the beginning of time, to avoid public contribution, were not relinquished, till, as Mr. Burke has confessed, a heavy proscription hung over its head?

The

The offer was at last made,—not from motives of patriotism or principles of justice, but when the hour of reckoning was approaching,—when severe infliction, on account of former refusals, was apprehended,—when they dreaded lest an account should be demanded of all that had been withheld.

Our author has contended, that the deficiency of the finances might have been supplied without seizing upon the Church property. Much of his argument is built upon an extract from Mr. Necker's public report, in which the excess of the expenditure over the revenue is settled at two millions sterling:—Why should Mr. Burke, in this instance, have relied implicitly upon the calculation of Necker, without taking into account the contradicting statement of another man, whose authority might, from him at least, have been expected to obtain equal respect?—If report may be believed, Monsieur de Calonne has been his informer in regard to many other matters; yet upon that on which he was best entitled to credit, his contradiction of Necker is overlooked, and a mass of calculation, the fallacy of which has been admitted by the retirement of its author, is made the unsubstantial basis of a tower of argument against encroachments upon Church property. There is in this a want of

candour, and a willingness to be deceived, which we could not have expected in Mr. Burke. A great part of his reasoning against the conduct of the Revolutionists in France, is built upon the supposition of the revenue having come within two millions of the expenditure, when it is notorious to the world that the deficiency was not less than five millions. De Calonne is, perhaps, an oracle of truth in regard to other circumstances, but cannot be trusted in his statement of finance. Yet his interest in exaggerating by report, the disorder of which he was considered a principal cause, is not very obvious.

A deficiency of two millions might, perhaps, have been recovered by regulation and retrenchment; but if the want be stated at five millions, every art of œconomy, every possible reduction, and every regard to the collection of the revenue, were obviously inadequate to the equalization of expenditure and receipt. When, therefore, the public creditor must be cut off from his annuity, or partial pressure made upon some other order in the State, the general means of resource being already on the rack, on whom could the heaviest load be settled with so much propriety, as those whose ingenious selfishness had long exerted all the craft of priesthood to avoid even equal contribution?—On whom, in a moment of distress, could

could the weight fall with so much justice, as on a class, whose scandalous exemption had been a principal cause of the ruinous embarrassment,—a body of men in possession of a magnitude of wealth, acquired in early periods, not unfrequently by the vilest artifice, and the most fraudulent abuse of their dominion over superstitious minds,—detrimental in the present times to the ends for which they are intended, and injurious to civil policy?—Every consideration of religion, justice and national advantage, pointed at the superfluous property of the Church, as the natural relief to the disordered finances of the State.

The so much reprobated attack upon the Church, Mr. Burke has ascribed to two principal causes. One of these is contempt for religion itself,—a principle of atheism, which, under the affectation of philosophy, endeavours to subvert the grounds of our faith, and by disgrace, as a prelude to abolition, aims ultimately at the destruction of the Christian doctrine. That free opinions have been propagated by the men whose names he enumerates, and whose labours will secure, to the end of time, a place to their memories among the brightest ornaments of literature, the world has lamented; but the influence Mr. Burke attributes to their sentiments respecting religion, is much greater than was due.—

As

As well might he assert, that Christianity has been subverted in this country by a Hume, a Kaims, or a Gibbon. Such men have existed in every age, and that part of their works which has aimed at the ruin of a system better calculated, in the confession even of its enemies, to the quiet and happiness of mankind than any other that has existed, or that genius could suggest, is least read and least respected. It has been viewed with sorrow, as a disgusting fault in one figure of a noble groupe upon a capital picture. Mr. Burke is elaborate in his defence of the French Clergy, and reasons with such insinuating energy in favour even of monasteries, that his enchanted readers are led, for the moment, to consider the want of these institutions as a defect in the establishment of Britain. In every order there are men of different descriptions; but it may be presumed that licentious manners, with neglect of duty, abuse of confessions, sale of dispensations, and the various incitements to the grand reform in the sixteenth century, have contributed to the curtailment of clerical rights in a much greater degree than the sneering comments of a Voltaire, or the unimpressive disquisitions of a D'Alembert. The reasoning of Mr. Burke applies with equal force against the great reform of Luther; and undoubtedly that admirable modification of Church Government, was resisted in its origin with

with equal plausibility, and by similar arguments. The opposers of Luther were not wanting in exclamations of robbery, rapine, sacrilege, profanation, impiety and encreasing atheism. Yet the Reformation is now regarded as a substantial blessing, and the remembrance of its promoters held in veneration wherever it was adopted.

Mr. Burke with better truth puts down, as another source of the liberties taken with Church property, the predominating influence of the monied interest in the National Assembly. His remarks upon the opposition that must subsist, under an extreme degree of national embarrassment, betwixt the monied interest, whose dependence is upon the credit of Government, and property under other circumstances, are excellent and forcible. They ought to prevail with the friends to our admired constitution, in reconciling them to burthens, and producing cheerful compliance with every exaction towards the discharge of our incumbrances. It is obvious, that if the unfortunate period should arrive, when, from a diminution of receipts, or an encrease of disbursements, the revenue would be unequal to the expenditure, the public creditor, stimulated by the dread of impending ruin, would rouse into action the amazing energy and indefatigable industry of the monied interest, to grasp at any prospect

prospect of selfish security, in general confusion. Mr. Burke, however, greatly under-rates the attention that was due to those who had demands upon the State. It is impossible to admit that the pecuniary engagements of the old Government had less claim to respect than any others of its contracts. This principle, which he endeavours to establish, is in opposition to every idea entertained in England of the sacred nature of public credit. Mr. Burke, in the British Parliament, voted that the influence of the Crown had encreased, was encreasing, and ought to be diminished. He could not be at rest till he had succeeded in a plan for restricting patronage, and diminishing the pension list;—yet now he can maintain that the holders of pensions in France, where the abuse of conferring pecuniary grants was ten times beyond what was ever practised in this country, were better intitled to their unmerited allowance, too often the recompense of servility and infamy, than the national creditor, whose seasonable supplies had sustained the honour of the kingdom in the hour of need, and its importance among States.

Let Mr. Burke reflect upon the extended ruin and complicated miseries with which public bankruptcy, the settled measure of the Court, would have been attended. The Clergy, it is true,

true, are compelled to descend from luxurious splendor, in ease and indolence, to a provision comparatively humble, and to diligent labour in their functions; yet still there is a comfortable means of support. To the public creditor all would have been lost,—the inheritance from ancestors, the fruits of industry, the savings of care,—all, all obliterated in one moment. The Clergyman, if he were even to lose his all in the church, loses but a life-rent, and his family are in the same situation as if he had been suddenly cut off by disease.—They are supposed to have secured some resource against an event which may be the misfortune of every succeeding day. But the Stock-holder would be robbed of that upon which he had depended as a permanent provision for himself and his family in generations to come. Age, sex, infirmity, and every condition, must sink from joyful independence to hopeless beggary, to misery, penury, and despair. Pathetic would be the picture, if Mr. Burke's descriptive talents were to be employed upon the horrors of a public bankruptcy. There cannot be conceived any thing more dreadful to humanity.—Let those whose means of subsistence are confined to funded property in this country, reflect upon the subject. It would not be the diminution of a life-rent, but the abolition of what had been regarded as a perpetuity.

tuity. There could be no remedy in limitation of expence, as nothing would be left to be expended,—every resource would be extinct. Dotage and infancy might draw subsistence from the wind; and thousands of women, who had flattered themselves with the sure possession of a fortune that might be their support in character and comfort, must be plunged into the greatest depth of human affliction! Could the National Assembly hesitate between a public bankruptcy and the propriety of applying to the exigencies of the State the superfluities of a property extended to a degree that was destructive to industry, and incompatible with freedom?

Mr. Burke not only insists upon the inviolable title of the Church to its estates, but refuses to the general necessity the plate, the paintings, and the statues. These, undoubtedly, are ornaments deserving respect in times of public affluence; but, under the heaviest condition of embarrassment that any nation has endured, shall delicacy and innocence be driven to the accumulated wretchedness of miserable prostitution, because there would be sacrilege in throwing into the public crucible a golden image of the Virgin?

As I have already observed, if we were to look back to the acquirement of Church property,
the

the manner would seldom give the unalienable claim which Mr. Burke has endeavoured to assert. I would not be understood entirely to approve the modification that has been made in France; but the conduct of England, during various periods, has established the principle of Church revenue being subject to such appropriations, as, under different circumstances, may appear best conducive to the ends of religion, and the advantage of the state; yet Mr. Burke, who in the beginning of his book is loud in abuse of the National Assembly, for deviating in their Revolution from the line of England, is now moved to the highest pitch of rage against their infringement of Church rights, a measure of which England has been the pattern! He vociferates sacrilege, rapine, robbery,—because the pampered inmates of an echoing cloyster must be contented with humbler, but more wholesome fare.—He rouses compassion by his cries of injustice, cruelty, tyranny,—because the charms of a nunnery are exposed to the world; and sensual Friars debarred from exclusive gratification, within the voluptuous recesses of a convent.

Such of Mr. Burke's readers as have had no other information but that which he conveys, in regard to the new constitution of the French Church, may perhaps be surprised to learn, that the

the sum appropriated to the care of religion is, at this moment, between five and six millions sterling; and that the wealth and importance of the Clergy will continue much greater than in any Protestant country, England excepted. It might be imagined, from the violence of Mr. Burke, that France was the first State which had assumed the *sacrilegious* privilege of altering the appropriation of Church property. Look to Scotland, to Holland, to every Protestant principality in Germany,—to England itself. The reformation in France appears mild, in comparison with what has taken place over a large portion of Europe; yet Christianity is brought into disgrace, as a prelude to its abolition!

Of all the measures which the National Assembly has decreed, the destruction of titles is that to which impartiality has the greatest difficulty in being reconciled: Varieties of order in society contribute to the elegance and beauty of the whole. The abolition of Nobility is apt to be regarded with peculiar disgust in this country, where the peerage is not only an ornament, but an essential ingredient,—an equal third of a Constitution enchanting in theory, and excellent practice. We have already admitted, that if a middle course of reform could have been pursued, severe reflections might rest upon many
 proceed-

proceedings of the popular party. When the
 states were first brought together, many resolu-
 tions, which were afterwards rendered indispen-
 sable by the discovered duplicity of the Court,
 had not a place in the contemplation of the most
 factious delegates.

Mr. Burke informs us, that the instructions
 from constituents to representatives in 1789, went
 merely to the correction of abuse, and reform
 of the existing government. Upon this circum-
 stance he erects a battery of argument against those
 representatives, who, in violation of the terms
 upon which they were deputed, have levelled
 to the dust that stupendous fabric which they
 were only commissioned to repair. But can he
 suppose the demolition was made without a pre-
 vious survey? The defects in the edifice were
 not incapable of remedy, if the presiding genius
 would have lent an approving countenance: but
 when the malignant influence of that incumbent
 power, to which deformity was pleasing, and
 imperfection the choicest prey, opposed itself to
 salutary repair, and hovered in terrors over the
 heads of those who had aimed at seasonable cor-
 rection, moderation became treason to the pub-
 lic;—the evil spirit must be extinguished, by
 razing its mansion,—by turning into ruins the
 pile from which it was inseparable. Necessity

D

was

was the irresistible cause of all that has since taken place. Necessity required that the prerogatives of the Crown should for a time be brought within undue restriction, as dependence could not be placed upon a monarch whose accession to a system of liberty had been involuntary.—Necessity required that the peerage should relinquish every distinction which carried sway over the people, because resistance was as much to be apprehended to any diminution of privilege, as to an entire abolition.

It may be asserted with confidence, that the bulk of the National Assembly would have been happy, if a Constitution like that of Britain could at once have been established, with the approbation of the King, and the support of the Peerage; but it soon became evident that such a modification, if attempted, would draw down the resentment of the Court, and the resistance of the Nobility, in not a less degree of violence than the greatest invasion of prerogative, or curtailment of privilege. There was not within the compass of attainment, any middle state between deeper despotism and the depression of obstructing power, by the utter extinction of prerogatives and privileges, which, under other circumstances, would have been secured to the Crown and the Peerage. Every motive of public and private interest

Interest required the abolition of consequence, that wanted but a favourable opportunity to declare against a constitution under which oppressive superiority was denied.

Mr. Burke has acknowledged that there was in the French Nobility something too much of pride, something too much of distance in conduct towards other men, and too exalted ideas of their own pre-eminence. Regarding all the arts of commerce as ignominious, they considered themselves a race of beings different in nature from plebeian traders. The younger branches even of families would not condescend to gain subsistence by industry or genius. Matrimonial connections with women of inferior degree, were not rescued from disgrace by the fortune of any object, or the brilliancy of her attractions. Interest was sacrificed to ostentation, and poverty increased as posterity multiplied. The Crown was the fountain of support towards which alone their views were directed. The state of dependence in which they stood, rendered them as servile to the Court as they were imperious to the People; and, like the Clergy, they found their reward of indiscriminate attachment and unenquiring zeal, in favours and exemptions injurious to industry, and adverse to general prosperity. With all this there might be a nice sense of honour, great gallantry, and many commendable qualities; but the con-

stitution of the body was hostile to freedom and unfavourable to improvement. Such is not the order in this country, where independence is its characteristic, and liberty its pride—where the ample fortunes of the rank need not the indecorous aid of pensionary provision—where servile submission to the Crown is not endured for the despicable purpose of being able to tyrannize over the people—where equal contribution is levied as upon every other class—where trade is not dishonourable, and the want of ancestry a matter of reproach—where the respect to the Peerage lends support to its dignity, without being degrading to those by whom it is paid—where a Lord of Parliament feels the due importance of his station, without being able to forget that, while a Peer, he is a Man. Such a Nobility gives strength to a system of freedom, and is an ornament to the community. But in France, the interest and prejudices of this order were so rooted in favour of that partial consequence which it enjoyed at the expence of the state, that there was no means of gaining such restrictions as liberty and policy required, without levelling the rank to the ordinary condition of life, and obliterating every mark of distinction. When the new constitution shall have acquired from riper age, sufficient firmness to maintain itself against assaults by which its present condition of infant tenderness might be overpowered, the Crown may be reinstated in prerogatives that

that give splendour to monarchy, and are possessed by it with advantage to the public,—the Nobility may be restored to moderate elevation and reasonable privileges. Much, however, must depend upon the future conduct of the Court and the late Peerage. The means of conciliating are not to intrigue, to plot, and to cabal—to give obstruction to every decree of the Assembly by holding out a prospect of a Counter-revolution—to encourage the people in refusal of taxes and resistance to law,—to use shameful efforts to bring reproach upon the popular party, by the propagation at home and abroad of scandalous rumours and monstrous reports. Of all this there has been too much, and the forbearance of power affords liberal testimony of the allowance that has been made for natural resentment on account of depression and reduction. The most inveterate foes of the new Government continue to draw their incomes from France, without the mulct of a farthing; whilst in neighbouring kingdoms they are labouring to their utmost, to raise a host against their country,—to combine foreign with domestic force for the restoration of tyranny,—to render the land that gave them birth, and sustains them with its fruits, a theatre of blood. A time, however, will come, when there must be an end to impunity, and when avowed enmity to the constitution will not be entitled to

that compassion which now permits it to pass unnoticed. It is their interest as it is their duty, to strive, without delay, against obnoxious habits, and banish from their sentiments every odious principle. Let them enter into the spirit of the new system, and levelling jealousies may be extinguished; but conformity alone can be a foundation of grace. If accident should discover, that under the mask of submission they continue to meditate resistance, all that has yet been done is moderation to what may follow.

Mr. Burke having wandered over the wide regions of fancy in quest of terms to express his abhorrence of the ruin that has been made, enters upon an examination of the new structure. It is not our intention to follow him at large, as all that can be said upon the subject is but speculation. Experience, the test of government, cannot yet be applied to that so lately established in France. No man is better calculated to speculate with ability, and predict with accuracy, upon the consequences of any system, than Mr. Burke, when not influenced by prepossession: but in the French Revolution every incident is subject of disgust. The method of building is, in his opinion, as contemptible and as fraudulent, as the plan of demolition was horrid and iniquitous. With respect to the legislative department,

partment, the executive branch, the judiciary establishments, the revenue and the army, there is not one circumstance that does not carry evidence of ignorance, absurdity, injustice, fraud, folly, and wickedness.

He attacks with great severity the plan of representation that has been established. I am convinced that his most partial readers,—unless they come entirely under the charge imputed in a favourite drama to the multitude, of catching at some authority from which they may form an opinion, without taking the trouble to judge for themselves,—must subscribe to the deception of his arguments and the fallacy of his conclusions in this instance. Mr. Burke is a great authority, but in this part of his subject, even plausibility is wanting; while sophistry, contradiction, and obscurity stand in the room of it.

To establish a representation that can appear tolerably fair, has long been considered as a task of the greatest difficulty; there was not any pattern that could serve to the French patriots as a guide. Cautious policy, and prudent dread of innovation, may protest against any alteration in this country, where the old mode has answered every good purpose; but madness itself could not betray such perversion of reason, as to follow the

state of British representation at a first settlement. Because Cornwall sends as many members as Scotland, would Mr. Burke have recommended an allotment equally partial in France? Because there are in this kingdom many boroughs where the electors are not six in number, and opulent cities without any privilege of election whatever, would Mr. Burke have conferred a franchise upon floorless cottages, while the greatest manufacturing towns, second only to the capital in wealth and population, were left without the power of sending a single delegate?

The National Assembly, by combining the interests of territory, population, and property, the principal objects of respect in representation, have had the greatest possible regard to equality. By instituting intermediate stages between the lowest condition of people and the representative, they have left to every man the satisfaction of a suffrage, while the dignity and fitness of delegates is secured. The increasing qualifications for the *commune* and *department*, bring the ultimate votes to a class much superior in situation to the bulk of electors in England; while the choice of a representative by the members of the *department*, in the instant after they themselves have been elected, secures a probability of an independent choice. There will be no time for entertain-
ments

ments, canvassing, and bribery,—no opportunities for bargaining. The ultimate electors are not possessed of their privilege until they are called upon to exert it. They will be men of condition, as in Scotland, but without the previous ability of turning their suffrage to selfish interest; intriguing, corruption, and perjury will be avoided. It were in vain for the candidates to think of carrying the arts of electioneering through the several stages. Character alone will give a chance of success, and the majority of votes will settle upon the man whose pretensions are strongest. The scheme is not visionary, like many that have been here suggested. It is an equitable representation, beautiful in theory, and easy in practice. It unites all the claims of equality, without the defects to which their admission has appeared liable. It has been the contrivance of policy and wisdom in a happy moment of invention.

Mr. Burke has found so much difficulty in starting rational objections to the plan, that his earnestness to depreciate has betrayed him into inconsistency. At one time he opposes the form of representation, because the intermediate stages separate the delegate from connection with his primary constituents: at another, the system of election is such, that every member must, of necessity,

necessity, consider himself the partial representative of the district by which he is deputed, without regard to the interest of the kingdom at large! Here, the regulation of *territory* gives to the country an undue proportion in its share of representation: there, respect to *population* and *contribution*, throws the whole powers of the legislature into the hands of city representatives, so as to enable Paris, in particular, to tyrannize over the kingdom. We have separation and connection, and the defects of the several standards of representation, considered without reference to their mutual dependence, and the checks they receive from each other! In one part of his volume, simplicity of form is a mark of ignorance in the founders of government; but now, when representation is considered, intricacy of system discovers confusion of ideas.

Mr. Burke arraigns the National Assembly for the abolition of parliaments. It may be answered, that they were inconsistent with the new government. Could bodies constituted after the manner of a French Parliament exist under the British Constitution? The States General having superseded the functions of controul, which parliaments enjoyed but in semblance, determined upon the creation of new judicial forms more consonant to justice. The offices of parliaments

were extinct, and therefore it was necessary they should be dissolved. It is marvellous that Mr. Burke should throw blame upon the suspension of jurisdictions, where the situations of the members were not bestowed upon learning and integrity, but offered at market to the highest bidder—that he should become the champion of courts, upon which the inestimable privilege of trial by jury could not be ingrafted.

The keenest acrimony of censure is applied by Mr. Burke to the new operations of finance. The emission of *assignats*, in particular, is branded as a contrivance unprecedented in infamy,—a monstrous effort of iniquity, bankruptcy, and fraud. Here again we shall find that our author's violence has led him into contradiction: he starts objections which are in direct opposition to each other, and when contrasted, fall mutually to the ground. If the measure be a measure of fraud and bankruptcy, it cannot have been solicited by the monied interest, upon whom its greatest ruin must devolve. If it be an issue of paper for which there is no adequate security, the national creditor, who is to receive it in payment of his debt, ought to have been exempted from the criminality of promoting the design: yet at his door the principal imputation is laid! Upon the monied interest is thrown the capital infamy of a
villainous

villainous project, which has just been described as a scandalous effort of a bankrupt government to relieve itself from embarrassment ! Upon them, who must be the principal sufferers by the imposition, rests the obloquy ! It will scarcely be credited by those who have not read Mr. Burke's Letter, that his reprobation of this scheme is pointed against it, in the first instance, as an act of bankruptcy ;—a compulsive emission of paper currency, without any sustaining security ;—a fraudulent conversion of the national debt into a circulating medium, of no value whatever : And that after a few pages have been turned over, a torrent of abuse is poured against the public creditor, as the contriver of those assignats which he is to receive in compensation of his claims upon the State ;—as the adviser of a project, by which the individual must be enriched, without Government being relieved. The first parts of Mr. Burke's argument is a complete refutation of his concluding reflections ; while those, in their turn, demonstrate the falsity of his primary aspersions. Mr. Burke, in ridicule, has employed the term *land bank* : under what description of banks can security be so valid as when the capital is,—not gold and silver, which must be hoarded in cellars, without the capability of increase, or occupied, with risque that may prove destructive, in trade,—but *terra firma*—multiplying estates within the
cogni-

cognizance of every person,—lands, to the value of which the amount of all the paper currency bears but a minute proportion? Is not a mortgage, with the title deeds in possession, esteemed substantial security? The assignats are better than a mortgage: they are receipts that represent estates, and are exchangeable at the pleasure of the holder, for adequate value in land. They are to be received as purchase-money for public property exposed to sale at public auction. The measure, impartially considered, will appear the most politic and prudent invention for parting with the national lands to the best advantage. It is beneficial to the kingdom, and acceptable to individuals. The eagerness of the latter to seize an opportunity of effecting a purpose so desirable, as to commute their pecuniary claims for land, must bring to the public prices considerably beyond the real value of each lot. The state, therefore, has a positive gain, whilst the creditor, gratified with the firm security he acquires, is not dissatisfied on account of the loss with which it has been procured. In addition to all this it may be mentioned, that the constitution obtains an increase of strength; the new proprietors of estates become bound to its maintenance, by a property depending upon its continuance. This indeed Mr. Burke has foreseen: this it is which

has

has roused his indignation against a scheme of financial perfection and dextrous policy.

Mr. Burke is not quite candid in mentioning the deficiency in the revenue since the Revolution, without taking into account the relief that has been given to slender means from very oppressive taxes, while new imposts have not yet had time to take effect.—He can even defend the duty that was levied on account of salt, a tax as unjust as any that tyranny could suggest.—He makes no allowance for the difficulties in collection, which were inevitable, during the anarchy of a Revolution, and which have been artificially fomented by his *clients*, the Aristocracy and Clergy. He endeavours to cast ridicule upon the National Assembly, for the appointment of a Committee of Mendicancy. Many in this country have been of opinion that a superintending board over poor's rates, would not be an object of ridicule; and the sum that would come under its observation, on account of London, might not make a contemptible figure by the side of that allotted to the support of poverty in Paris. That there is a diminution of revenue from disorder over the kingdom, and much idleness from interruption to business of every kind, cannot be doubted; but these are among the temporary evils unavoidable in every revolution; they will
be

be succeeded by an improved spirit of good order and industry.

Mr. Burke turns his forces at last against the military provision of the kingdom, and exults in its condition of anarchy and sedition, as testified in a letter of the Secretary for the War Department. There has not, since the Revolution, been any occurrence, concerning which opinions are more divided, than the conduct of the French army. Its desertion from the late Government has been branded as treachery, and exalted as patriotism. The enquiry is of a very delicate kind. Subordination is of so much importance to all the good purposes for which armies are assigned, that extraordinary indeed must be the cases in which obedience to Government, and zeal in the execution of command, ought to be obstructed by any investigation of the nature of the service; yet, unless it be admitted that there may be circumstances under which defection shall become a virtue, there is no security in any Constitution. Unless the principle of subordination is received with some exception, freedom, where it may appear best established, is but a vision. If the army be positively debarred from deliberation or judgment, under any concurrence of events, the proscriptions of a Sylla may be executed within the bosom of the best regulated state.

state. There are not many who would contend for the doctrine of passive obedience to this extent. It must be acknowledged that situations may arise, under which an army ought not to follow its leader. The question therefore should be, whether or not the state of affairs in France afforded sufficient reason for revolt? I think that candid observation must answer in the affirmative.

When there are divisions among the people, and violent parties at variance with each other, execration must fall upon any army that could hesitate about fidelity to government. But when a nation, with one voice, exclaims against subsisting grievances, and the demands of redress resound from one extremity of an empire to the other, shall the military be blind to prevailing unanimity?—Dreadful was the situation of the French army which had been giving independence to the Western world, where there was no defect in personal liberty, when it was compelled to recede from allegiance to the Monarch, or stain its weapons in the blood of fellow-citizens, who had dared to fight for *habeas corpus*. How could that military which had been employed in asserting the rights of a people, whose only grounds of complaint against the mother country, was a power assumed, not by an individual or a cabinet,

cabinet, but a British Parliament, of imposing taxes where there was no representation, direct its fury against patriots at home, who had demanded the establishment of some controul over the receipt and expenditure of a revenue raised by the arbitrary edict of one man?

Let it likewise be remembered, that the French army had within itself much cause of dissatisfaction. The scanty pittance of the native soldier was rendered more galling by the greater allowance to the less respectable mercenary. The highest departments were filled by the nobility, who ascended not by gradation, as in our excellent system, but were raised at once, without experience or pretension, over the heads of veteran subalterns, to whom a *Croix de St. Louis* was the only recompense of signal services. It was not as here, where the youngest ensign, if his conduct be deserving and his days prolonged to a moderate period, may be certain of arriving at the highest rank in his profession. The subordinate departments of the army were as much depressed and degraded by the pre-eminence of nobility, as the people at large.

Let us likewise reflect upon the unequalled disgrace which the national honour had, within a few years, sustained. What must be the feel-

E ings

ings of military men in particular, their sense of public and private honour being most acute, at that memorable period, when after millions had been expended for the purpose of securing the connexion of Holland, the whole plan was overturned, the scheme entirely defeated, and the weakness of Government held out to the contempt of every nation upon the globe?—What must be the sentiments of a gallant army of two hundred thousand men, when it discovered that its hands were tied, thro' the waste and extravagance of a dissipated Court? When a nation, whose power and resources had been considered as the greatest in the world, was obliged, from the profusion and misconduct of its rulers, to sit down under an insult the most mortifying that ever was endured. When a rival State, taking advantage of the pecuniary disorder which profligacy and licentiousness had brought on, trod under its feet an empire that had been the dread of the universe, and tore to pieces at once a chain of designs, to the extension of which an immensity of wealth had been applied by treacherous policy for ages. Every man's was the disgrace; but the army, conscious that its ability of avenging was restrained only by the mismanagement of government, must take to itself the largest portion.

Was it to be expected that an army should retain much attachment to that system under which
its

its nicest feelings had been inflicted with the most pungent wound, and the name of France exposed to derision?—It could not but join with the people in overturning a form, of which the effect had been so ruinous. There was then merit in revolt. But can the restoration of order be looked for in an instant?—And cannot Mr. Burke see the necessity for putting arms into the hands of an immense militia, at a time when internal tumults may be dreaded, and invasion from external force apprehended?

To maintain tolerable order in the prodigious armed force which is demanded by the present condition of France, cannot be regarded as a matter of common difficulty. To the credit of the superintending power, it must be admitted, that the concomitant evils of subordination infringed, have hitherto been averted with success that must appear extraordinary, when circumstances are considered. The past preservation of harmony, without any very terrible interruptions, carries the mind in flattering expectation to the speedy re-establishment of energy and discipline under the same excellent management. That there have been tendencies to mutiny, and differences between the regular and constitutional troops, is not cause of surprize to men of unbiaſſed reason. They will have comfort, however,
in

in reflecting, that the spirit of sedition growing naturally out of great revolutions, has, by salutary correction and prudent restraint, been kept within such moderate bounds, that no serious mischief has taken place; and that the increasing contraction of these limits, gives grateful evidence of its progressive dissipation and declining elasticity. In opposition to a thousand predictions in which the enemies of the new government have in vain sought consolation, the free constitution of the French empire is advancing in stability, while breathless faction and expiring tumult bequeath disappointment and despair to their sorrowful dependants.

Mr. Burke appears to be alarmed at the risk of universal confusion, from the fatal influence of the French example over other nations. It is indeed an awful warning to undue dominion, in every part of the world; but the opposite effect to that which he apprehends, appears more natural. Where systems are defective, despotism should take lesson, and learn to purge itself of its malignant humours. Let kings and princes survey the condition of their people with earnest attention to real grievances, and serious determination to make voluntary surrender of obnoxious prerogatives, which contribute neither to the security of rational government, nor the advantage
of

of the public. Let every order that claims particular elevation in a state, be satisfied with that moderate distinction which may be allotted to individuals with a view towards some general good, without insisting upon unjust and oppressive privileges of pecuniary consideration, or tyrannical sway. Let it never be forgotten, that every deviation in rank from the common equality of nature, has, in its end, not the gratification of vanity to those in whom it is allowed, but the interest of the community.

Church establishments in particular, should draw instruction from the proceedings in France. Descending from the exploded doctrines of divine right and indefeasible claim, which, in days of ignorance and superstition, have placed them above the reach of legislation, let them consider themselves as institutions, of which the endowments are public property, subject to the correction and modification of the State. Let them trust for influence and respect, not to positive rights, which the practice of the world, the test of right, does not acknowledge, but to the utility of religion, the indispensable necessity of an established form, and the propriety of protecting its professors in dignity and comfort.

While

While the superior orders of society are instigated to temperance and moderation in the exercise of pre-eminence, the people at large cannot but receive useful admonition from the same lesson. The calamities connected with every radical change, must inspire satisfaction under every tolerable government, and horror of revolutions. If the example of France produces its due effect upon authority, it will not be wanting in benign influence over those whose business is submission.

But whatever the effect may be upon many States, Britain, at least, is secure from apprehension of disorder. Great as is the appearance of improvement in the French government, distant will still be the prospect of its rivalling in excellence the English constitution. Every man in this country will acquire from the contrast, a more exquisite sense of the blessings he enjoys; and the several orders in society will be stimulated to perseverance in the conscientious discharge of their mutual functions and respects. While every fear of civil discord is removed, the chance of external tranquillity becomes more flattering, from the imbecility of a Power which, under its late condition, was insidious in peace, and formidable in war. 10 FE 58

F I N I S.

THE HONORABLE HANSHI THE TACITUS
[faded text]

[faded text]

[faded text]

[faded text]

[faded text]

[faded text]

[faded text]

[faded text]

[faded text]

*The following PAMPHLETS, TRACTS, &c.
have been lately printed at the LOGOGRAPHIC PRESS,
and are just published by J. WALTER, N^o 169,
PICCADILLY.*

I.

A FEW WORDS on the Nature of the SLAVE TRADE;
and the Measures which ought to be adopted.—Price 1s. 6d.

II.

In One Volume Octavo, Price 2s. 6d. in Boards.

OBSERVATIONS, occasioned by the Attempts made in England
to effect the ABOLITION of the SLAVE TRADE. Shewing the
Manner in which Negroes are treated in the British Colonies in the
West-Indies. And also some particular Remarks on a Letter ad-
dressed to the Treasurer of the Society for effecting such Abolition,
from the Rev. Mr. ROBERT BOUCHER NICHOLS, Dean of Mid-
dleham.
By G. FRANKLYN, Esq.

III.

In One Volume Octavo, Price 5s.

AN ANSWER to the Rev. Mr. CLARKSON'S ESSAY on the
SLAVERY and COMMERCE of the HUMAN SPECIES, parti-
cularly the AFRICAN; in a Series of Letters from G. FRANKLYN,
Esq. in Jamaica, to his Friend in London.

IV.

CONSIDERATIONS on the late DISSOLUTION
of PARLIAMENT; addressed to the ELECTIVE BODY
of the PEOPLE; with a View of the EXISTING PARTIES.
By the AUTHOR of a LETTER from a COUNTRY GENTLEMAN
to a MEMBER of PARLIAMENT.

V.

THE IMPORTANT DEBATE in the House of Com-
mons, on Tuesday, the 2d March, 1790, on Mr. Fox's Motion for a
REPEAL of the CORPORATION and TEST ACTS.—Price 1s.

VI.

CURSORY REFLECTIONS on the Policy, Justice,
and Expediency of Repealing the TEST and CORPORATION
ACTS.—By W. BRISTOW, Esq.—Price 1s. 6d.

VII.

Handsomely printed, in Quarto, price 2s.
OBSERVATIONS on the present State of the ROYAL ACA-
DEMY; with Characters of LIVING PAINTERS.
By an OLD ARTIST.

VIII.

STRICTURES on DUELLING: Selected from the most
authentic Authors; with ADDITIONS.
By a Gentleman, late of the University of Oxford. Price 1s.

IX.

A New Edition of the FIRST and SECOND RE-
PORTS of his MAJESTY'S PHYSICIANS, for the Convenience
of those who wish to transmit a correct State of the Reports of the
Physicians who attended his Majesty, to their Friends Abroad.